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RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 4919  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 7043  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002865

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)  
SUBJECT: DELHI DIARY, JUNE 13-20

REF: A. NEW DELHI 02766

[B](#). NEW DELHI 02315  
[C](#). NEW DELHI 2508

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#). (U) Below is a compilation of political highlights from Embassy New Delhi for June 13-20, 2007 that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

- Gloomy Pakistan Envoy
- GOI Ministry of Defense sends Shekhar Dutt to Bait the Bear
- Doctor in India Arrested for Female Feticide
- NDA and Third Front Name Their Presidential Hopefuls
- UPA Presidential Candidate Patil Puts Her Foot In Her Mouth

Gloomy Pakistan Envoy  
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[1](#). (C) At a June 10 dinner with PolCouns, Pakistani Deputy High Commissioner Afrasiab complained bitterly that India was ignoring Pakistan. Still angry that Indian Foreign Minister (FM) Pranab Mukherjee had snubbed Pakistani FM Kasuri on May 7 at the margins of an ASEM meeting, Afrasiab suggested he had been betrayed by the GOI, since he believed he had obtained an iron-clad commitment from Mukherjee to meet with Kasuri. Afrasiab warned that the window for a Kashmiri settlement would close, and said that in the future Pakistan might become less forward-leaning. When PolCouns pressed for the meaning of this prediction, Afrasiab insisted that he was not foreshadowing any change in government in Islamabad, but only indicating concern that India would miss an opportunity to close on the "easily resolvable" issues of Sir Creek and Siachen. While the U.S. and China may be important to India, Afrasiab insisted (contrary to the evidence he had provided earlier) that Pakistan remains India's number one preoccupation.

GOI Ministry of Defense sends Shekhar Dutt to Bait the Bear  
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[2](#). (C) Stung by Russian price-gouging and broken promises in recent military procurement deals (ref A & B), New Delhi is dispatching Defense Secretary Shekhar Dutt and Secretary of Defense Production KP Singh (rumored to be replacing Dutt in

the next few weeks) to Russia this week to try to break through the logjam. The hottest debate will be renegotiating the cost of the Russian contract for 138 additional SU-30 jet fighters. Moscow has demanded a five percent cost escalation for delivery of the remaining aircraft, which could push the total price up to USD two billion above-and-beyond the original contract. New Delhi finds itself begging the Russians to lower their demands. New Delhi will also be calling the Russians to task for the delay, now predicted to last until 2010, for delivery of the aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov, as well as cost-overruns for the ship's refurbishment that will stick New Delhi with paying an additional USD 113 million, a cost not included in the original contract. Breaking tradition of not commenting negatively on ongoing military sales, India's Minister of Defense A.K. Antony went as far as to publicly admit on June 16 that there were significant "problems" with the Gorshkov deal.

13. (C) Comment: In the end, New Delhi and Moscow will probably compromise by linking the two deals together, with the Indians agreeing not to slap a monetary & late delivery<sup>8</sup> penalty for the Gorshkov delay if the Russians agree to subtract an equivalent amount from the Sukhoi or Gorshkov cost increases. With so many military procurement deals still on the pipeline, including Kazan helicopters, missile frigates and T-90 tanks, both sides need to ensure ongoing cooperation, despite the recent embarrassing public blowups. As a new friend, the USG has an opportunity to milk these problems, by being contrasted against the "old, reliable comrade" Moscow. End Comment

Doctor in India Arrested for Female Feticide

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14. (U) Indian and international media reported that Indian police arrested General Practitioner Dr. Ajay Kumar Singh on June 14, accusing him of illegally aborting female fetuses. The arrest followed a raid at his clinic in Gurgaon in Harayana state (near Delhi) which uncovered the remains of several female fetuses in a nearby well. India banned gender selection and selective abortion in 1994.

15. (SBU) Comment: While exact numbers can never be known, the Indian Government estimates that 10 million girls have been killed ) either before or immediately after birth ) by their parents over the past 20 years. In related news, UPAs candidate for President, Pratibha Patil, an advocate for women, has already identified female feticide at the top of her agenda. She could be a powerful voice in advocating for the rights of the girl-child. End Comment.

NDA and Third Front Name Their Presidential Hopefuls  
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16. (U) (Also see Ref C) On June 18, the Opposition NDA coalition and the newly formed Third Front (which has adopted the name the United Progressive National Alliance (UPNA)) separately identified their Presidential hopefuls. During intense negotiations, the NDA first attempted to convince current President Abdul Kalam to contest for a second term. However, Kalam told the NDA he would only run as the consensus candidate of all parties. The NDA then endorsed current Vice President (VP) Bhairon Singh Shekawat, who is running as an Independent. The UPNA then shocked political pundits nationwide by throwing its weight behind Kalam, and will meet with him on June 20 to discuss the future. The UPNA, determined to retain an opposition identity, refused to support the Congress candidate, while rejecting Shekawat as a "communist" too close to the RSS/BJP.

17. (C) Comment: If on June 20, Kalam is persuaded to run for a second Presidential term, the NDA coalition would pull support from Shekawat and return to Kalam. In such an

unlikely event, VP Shekhawat would step aside, leaving a contest between UPA candidate Prathiba Patil and NDA/Third Front supported candidate Abdul Kalam. However, Kalam, a scientist not a politician, does not have an appetite for an adversarial contest and will most likely opt out. This would leave a race between VP Shekhawat and Patil. Prior to declaring for Kalam, the UPNA threw a few other names around, including former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Farooq Abdhullah. UPNA insiders indicate that support for the Kalam option is not very strong, and the party may simply abstain should Kalam decline to run again. We judge that UPA candidate Patil is the strong favorite to become India's next President. End Comment.

UPA Presidential Candidate Patil Puts Her Foot In Her Mouth

18. (U) In a public address on June 17, UPA Presidential candidate Prathiba Patil shocked the Muslim community with a remark regarding the practice of purdah (referring to Muslim women covering their head and often their entire face with a veil). Patil attributed the origins of purdah to the Mughal Empire, as Indian women were forced to adopt the practice to "save women from Mughal invaders." Though Patil meant to empower women by calling for the end of an antiquated practice which she believes perpetuates gender inequities, she stepped on a landmine by echoing opinions expressed by the Hindu right. As a result, the Muslim community challenged her secular credentials. Although the criticism seems to have blown over, once an opposition candidate is chosen and the presidential race begins in earnest, this gaffe could cost her some electoral votes. In a somewhat tempered defense, Congress leaders noted that Patil will have to exercise caution when deviating from written remarks, but made allowances since she has been out of national politics for so long. In the end, this did not deter Congress from sealing the deal with Patil, and filing papers confirming her

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as their Presidential candidate.  
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